Fall 2018

I Spy with My Little Eye: Anthology of Student Works 2018

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Description

Publication designed by Erin Barnett, SWOSU student, in conjunction with the 8th Annual Literary Festival, entitled "I Spy," held on the Sayre campus of Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 409 E. Mississippi, Sayre, Oklahoma. Produced/Edited by SWOSU instructors Terry Ford, Landry Brewer, and Assistant Professor/Librarian April Miller, under the direction of Sherron Manning, Dean of the College of Associate and Applied Programs. This publication contains the works of SWOSU-Sayre students in the fall of 2017 and the spring, summer and fall of 2018.

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I Spy with My Little Eye

Southwestern Oklahoma State University - Sayre

Anthology of Student Works

2018
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Cover photo by Suraj Patel, SWOSU Student

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Publication designed by Erin Barnett, SWOSU student, in conjunction with the 8th Annual Literary Festival, entitled “I Spy,” held on the Sayre campus of Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 409 E. Mississippi, Sayre, Oklahoma. Produced/Edited by SWOSU instructors Terry Ford, Landry Brewer, and Assistant Professor/Librarian April Miller, under the direction of Sherron Manning, Dean of the College of Associate and Applied Programs. This publication contains the works of SWOSU-Sayre students in the fall of 2017 and the spring, summer and fall of 2018.
Once upon a time there was a frail high school girl that did everything that the world wanted her to do. If the world asked her to play sports, she did. If the world told her to make all A’s, she said yes ma’am. The girl always did what the world wanted instead of following her heart, which made her grow weak. At this point, the audience is probably expecting some Prince Charming to sweep the basic girl off her feet and make her wildest dreams come true – no this is a real-world story. Days and then weeks went by as the gloomy girl felt like she was wasting her life pleasing the world instead of her heart.

One day, she saw the rebellious teens gathering around the dumpster, lighting trash on fire. The young, wild, and careless essence that the gothic kids gave off made the tidy young girl envy them. She too wanted to light things on fire and parade around how she wanted to. The only problem was, she was so used to doing what the world wanted, she was very realistic about her future. Throughout her whole life, the world had told her that there was one way to be successful and it was that way or the highway. Deep down the girl wanted to experience being a teenager but feared ending up as a lost adult. Remember, this is a real-world story, so who is going to save this young girl without the help of Prince Charming or Fairy God Mothers?

College. As high school ended and summer began, the young girl began to slowly take the reigns of her life and have fun. She began planning her college future and looking forward to trying new things. She felt as if she had a second chance on life. At times, the girl worried she could not handle making decisions without the world, but deep down she knew it would all work out. Alas, move-in day has arrived and the young, frail high school girl has developed from a caterpillar to a butterfly and is ready to take on the world.
Clearing the Battlefield

By Cody Ferris

There I was,
Sitting, waiting for the right
time.
Thinking I’d miss what it was.
But then a sign,
A sign that shined so bright
That I couldn’t miss it.
I knew it was right.
The saying “love is a battlefield”
couldn’t be any truer.
I’ve saved you from being
killed.
Our bond so strong,
It couldn’t be broken.
This is just our love song.
Love is not something to kid
about,
It is something you should
Want to scream and shout.
The battles we fight,
Are just little tiffs,
In a love so right.
We fight our inner demons,
We conquer our fears,
And it just deepens
Our love.
We battle your depression,
We fight to stay together,
Even with all my aggression,
Our love is true.
And we are meant to be?
Because I know I love you.

Nature is Love

Photo by Hannah Alford
As the Sun Sets

By Jessica Blacksher

As the sun sets,
everything hits.
As the sun sets,
reality is a miss.
How did I get here?
This wasn't on my list.
Where did I go in life?
As the sun sets,
tears fill my eyes.
Will I be forgotten in time?
I know they care,
but I just can't stay here.
As the sun sets,
you will see me fly high.
All you have to do is look in the sky.
As the sun sets,
at home I'll be.
That's where you will find me.
Protest in Every Form

By Jayden Dillon

Staring into the face of tyranny, the crowd of troops and revolutionaries storm the Bastille. Colonial men, covered in darkness, empty hundreds of crates of tea into the now brown-tinted Northeastern harbor. Prohibited from the selling of, and then heavily taxed by the British in the buying of salt, one of the staples of their diet, 2,500 Indians led by Mohandas Gandhi march some 240 miles. Gathered in Washington D.C., thousands of supporters of all backgrounds turn a hopeful ear as Martin Luther King Jr. steps up to the podium. These people wanted a change. They wanted justice and so they fought for it by taking up arms, by taking to foot, by raising up their voice. They fought for justice by protesting.

A protest is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as “a complaint, objection, or display of unwillingness usually to an idea or a course of action.” Originally when the word “protest” became popular to use, the adage of the word “against” was next to imperative which almost softened the words meaning. As the social scene around the world began to change, so did the word’s usage. During the turn of the twentieth century, the use of prepositions with “protest” made the word into something more rebellious. When “protest” was used, people likely thought of acts of civil disobedience such as a protest march or a protest strike. The word eventually evolved into what we know it as today. When we hear the word “protest” in America, most of us would be quick to think of more of a riotous scene then what the word denoted at its origin.

When examining the results that emerge under a search of the word “protest,” such as the storming of the Bastille, the Salt March, or the March on Washington, there is a direct correlation to the metamorphosis of the words usage, with a few exceptions. While in earlier years someone may protest their treatment by simply saying, “I protest my treatment!” followed by little or no action, later generations began to take a more boisterous approach. Some marched in protest while others may have held up a fist or taken a knee to show their disdain. In conclusion, the word “protest” can be interpreted in many different ways, and each way is accurate within its own social and historical setting.
Garden of the Gods

Photo by Erin Barnett
Sketches

By Ravin Ray
My lungs are burning and I can’t seem to focus. The only thing I can hear is my blood flowing through every vein in my body. Time has never been so slow. It is so cold in this waiting room that I can almost feel it reaching my bones. My family is sobbing, and I can’t manage to provide a second of comfort. Emotional comfort has never been my strong suit, but it seems it might start to be. We are all holding our breath waiting for some information to slide through the waiting room doors. These white walls only contribute to the blankness in my head. Everyone shifts as the doctor is walking up to the doors. He stops, discussing something quietly with the short blonde nurse who has tried her hardest to comfort our shaky family. He makes his way in. A very tan man has never looked so pale.

He musters up the courage and finally breathes out, “I am very sorry.” Everyone looks to my mother. Have you ever witnessed someone shatter into a billion pieces? About 13 people did in that moment. It is a chain; every person begins realizing what this statement meant. I can’t stop myself, only watch the room spin as I fall out of my ice-cold chair heading face down to the floor. I hit the ground with undeniable force, but I couldn’t feel a thing. I could feel the space left gaping in the world from where my brother, my best friend, lived. Death feels so lonely. So... empty. What can I do but melt? I can’t control anything in my head or my body. I peel myself off of the floor and crawl to my mother who is now plastered on my father’s lap. I don’t know how many minutes have passed. I look around and the doctor and the nurse are still standing near the doorway. I assume they’re waiting on someone to give them instructions on viewings or whatever else there is to say.

“I love you,” I say to my mother as she stands up and makes her way to the doctor.

She turns around, blind from her tears, and mutters “You, too.” The remaining twelve of us watch her carefully as she and the doctor whisper to each another. After a minute or two, me, my father and my mother are gathering ourselves and making our way to my brother. The hallway seems so short compared to a couple hours ago. Everything seems to exist without a purpose now. Suddenly we are here, outside the door. It opens into an even colder room. We make our way in and before I could prepare myself, there he is. It is a numbness that engulfs us now. All three of us just stand completely frozen in space.

I know this is a moment that should remain silent, but I can’t help myself.

“I don’t understand. He looks so normal,” I burst out. I’m now in tears and spitting out phrases that nobody could
decipher. I should be comforting my mother when she has just
lost a piece of herself, her only son. Instead, I am the one falling
apart.

My mother responds in a raspy, almost whispering
tone, “I don’t know, Baylee.” My father hasn’t spoken a single
word. His only son, the son he played sports with, fished with,
shopped with, laughed and loved with, is gone. We will never
see my brother go to prom, get married, graduate, go to college,
and whatever else people view as major points in life. He just
isn’t here. He isn’t anywhere. I just feel helpless, and for the first
time in my life, I can’t fix or bandage a problem. We have been
in here twenty minutes at the least, just staring. My mother
cares for my brother’s face with so much love that I feel it.

Someone lays a hand on my shoulder and politely tells
me “it’s time. You all need to get some sleep.”

I look in the direction of the hand and ask, “But how?
How do I sleep after this? What will sleep fix?”

The voice replies, “Give it a try. It helped me in ways I
didn’t think it could. Just don’t sleep too much. You have to take
care of yourself, too.” I take the statement with me and gather
my family. We all arrive at the waiting room to part ways with
our extended family for the next couple of days. Everyone needs
time to grieve. I drove my parents here in a rush earlier and now
I am driving them home at the slowest rate imaginable. It is hard
to leave him behind on that cold table. Does he feel alone? Is he
at peace? I will never get these questions answered. Before I
know it, we are home. The porch light is like a knife to our eyes.

We make our way
through the once
warm, cheerful living
room to the stairs. I
help my mother up
them silently.

At the top of the stairs,
my father takes over. I

crack open my bedroom door, slip in and shut it immediately. I
don’t want to hear my mother’s sobs for another second. Her
pain is deafening. I crawl into the ice-cold crisp sheets and try to
quiet my thoughts. I am getting drowsy, so I put it to rest for the
night.

It’s now Sunday. The day after my brother died. I keep
thinking about how such horrific things can happen to anyone at
any time. Everyone thinks, “Oh, it’s not my family, so it’s fine,”
but that’s not the case. It can happen to anyone, and my family
and friend community learned that very quickly yesterday. I feel
even worse for not being more sympathetic to those who have
experienced this. It’s like being a sheet hanging outside in the
wind where you can’t control what goes on with yourself. My
emotions are scattered and dried out. Thinking about other trag­
edy helps in a way. It helps me worry about others and not focus
on how I feel, just how they feel. But at the same time, it is add­
ing more grief onto what is stored in my subconscious. I wish I
hadn’t taken all of my time with him for granted. I always
thought I would see him at home every night. I ache all over as I try to maneuver my way through the valley of sheets and blankets.

Finally, I find solid ground. I shuffle to the closet and find something fitting for the day’s cloudy weather. Sweats and a hoodie? Perfect. I am all set to go downstairs and wait on the couch for hours in the hopes that one of my parents will make an appearance. It is already 3 p.m.

Once I made it to the couch it isn’t more than twenty minutes that my father walks into the room. Silence chews at my heart.

“Dad?” I ask shyly, “Where is mom?”

He glances at me quickly. I am sure he is hoping that I don’t see the tears hanging on his eyelashes. But I do. I run and hug him before he can escape the moment. I need conversation more than ever. I can’t stand another moment of hearing my own body function when my brother’s cannot.

For the first time in almost a whole day, he speaks.

“Mom is in bed. Come join us,” he said.

I haven’t been in bed with my parents in about ten years. I was seven the last time I sought out their comfort.

We make our way into the room and find warmth under the covers next to my very still mother. I feel better knowing our love will get us through this.

We all just lay there in silence, but in peace. There are many cold, empty days ahead. Especially with a funeral to come. But I don’t want to think about that now. I just want to reminisce on the amazing moments our family of four, now three, had together. The memories keep me warm, and I can feel myself dazing off into sleep again. I wonder if this empty feeling will ever fade. I haven’t had a chance to escape its company since the car wreck.

Artwork
by Lauren Jones

I have found the one whom my soul loves.
Song of Solomon 3:4
Taj Mahal
Photos by Suraj Patel
Open Country

Bird’s-Eye View

Photo by Caleb Lyons

Photo by Suraj Patel
Serenity
By Erin Barnett

Glistening fine lights
casting shadows into sight.
With these eyes, I spy.
Illuminating,
gold flecks with all their might
bearing peace to the darkest night.

Golden Peace
Photo by
Suraj Patel
Reflections

Photo by

Hannah Alford
Peacocks
Sonnet by Emanuel Luna

Beautiful as a bundle of flowers
For someone whom you admired
Falling in love is as strong as having powers
Share the love and others will be inspired
With its gorgeous majestic color scheme
All you see is the explosion in the air
Which might look like a dream
But all you can do is just stare
It being clean, peaceful, and free
People also treating it calm and with respect
In which it is the key
For we the people to protect
As wild peacocks roam
We will only see it like home
A Drop of Sun

Look to the Sky

Photos by Suraj Patel
Through the Scope

Photo by Suraj Patel

Rolling Hills

Photo by Samantha Bullard
The game of life isn’t a fair one, is it? Once, there were two young sisters—Carmen, five, and Cassidy, ten. They were very outgoing girls and they enjoyed playing lots of games together. Their favorite game to play together was “I Spy with My Little Eye.” They played the game together every afternoon, while their parents watched, in their big backyard surrounded by massive, thick trees; however, everything changed when suddenly, both the girls lost at their “favorite game.”

Carmen was fantastic at the game; she often practiced with her friends at school so she could go home and beat her older sister. Cassidy was struggling to find what Carmen was “spying.”

“I can’t let Carmen beat me today. She’s won every day for the past week!” thought Cassidy as she raced home after basketball practice. Cassidy thought it was strange that the object that would win the game for Carmen every day was the same color each time, black. Cassidy was hopeful, though. She understood that the options for black objects in their surroundings were becoming more and more limited; she would eventually win the game, right?

Cassidy made it home quickly. She didn’t even bother cleaning up before running into Carmen’s room.

“Come on, let’s go play before it gets dark!” exclaimed Cassidy. Carmen looked at Cassidy from her bed, “I don’t really want to,” she said quietly.

“Don’t be silly,” said Cassidy, “Of course you do. You always want to play!”

“Okay,” Carmen hesitated for a moment before sliding off her bed and onto the floor.

The two girls generally had a good home life, but their parents fought quite often. The past week was the worst the girls had seen of their parents arguing. They were screaming at each other in the living room when Cassidy stepped into the room to tell them they were going outside. They didn’t notice her, and she became too afraid to disrupt them, so she grabbed Carmen’s hand and they slipped out the back door quietly. “Are mommy and daddy fighting because we’re moving?” asked Carmen suddenly.

“What? We aren’t moving,” said Cassidy in a confused voice. They continued to walk out to the trees. “Yes, we are. I heard mommy say so. Daddy doesn’t want to, though,” said Carmen very confidently.

They stopped several yards away from the trees, as they knew they would get in trouble if they walked past the trees. It was starting to get dark, so Cassidy wanted to hurry up and play the game, she was determined to win this time. “I Spy with My Little Eye… something green,” paused Cassidy, waiting for an answer.

“Is it the caterpillar on that branch over there?” asked Carmen. Cassidy’s smirk fell and she gasped in amazement.

“You’re cheating!” she exclaimed. Carmen looked puzzled.

“How could I cheat?” she asked.

“I don’t know, but you have to be!” yelled Cassidy, frustration laced in her tone. “I’m not, I pinky promise!” cried out Carmen.

They held pinkies and swore to each other that they’d never cheat. They decided to walk just a little bit farther, it was getting a bit darker out and harder to see. They had no idea how close they were to the trees until it was too late; they were right in front of them. The groaning of the trees bending in the wind, and the whistling of the branches almost completely drowned out the yelling coming from the inside of the house. Cassidy took two steps back when she realized how close they were. Carmen didn’t move an inch.

Carmen was silent, staring into the groaning trees. “I Spy with My Little Eye,” she paused, “something black and white.” Cassidy was thrown off by the added color, but she was grateful considering it would be difficult to see something black when it’s dark outside. Cassidy’s eyes scanned her surroundings very slowly, then they suddenly stopped on something. A tall, black shadow was standing, like a human, behind a tree almost directly in front of Carmen.

Cassidy almost missed it, the only reason why she didn’t was because she saw the whites in its eyes first. The trees were screaming now, as if in a warning. Cassidy tried to run away and grab Carmen at the same time, but the thing grabbed Carmen and pulled her into the trees. Cassidy ran away frightened. She ran into the house frantically screaming. Her parents stopped arguing to listen to the traumatic event that had unfolded just moments before.

Several years passed, Carmen was never found. As Cassidy got older and became more capable of coping with what happened that day, her parents revealed a shocking truth. Apparently, a man dressed in all black had been watching the girls play for about a week before Carmen’s kidnapping. Her parents were arguing over moving out of town, Cassidy’s mom wanted to move away from the stalker, but her dad wanted to stay and work; he was convinced he could protect all his girls. Cassidy wanted to win the game so badly; instead, both the girls lost that day.
The Secret in the Falls

By Reagan Benton

Waterfalls
Roaring, gushing
Overpowering anything in the way.

Do not forget,

There are small falls
Dripping, dropping

Small hidden secrets in beautiful waterfalls.

Photo by
Reagan Benton
I Spy Beauty in Nature

Photos by Reagan Benton
Wildflowers

By Reagan Benton

Wildflowers in the field
Wildflowers bend and sway
Wildflowers with no care about today
There is beauty in the simplicity
Simplicity of a life without woes
I Spy with My Little Eye

By Karlee Morgan

I spy with my little eye
Something in his heart that he cannot deny
He may not like to admit it
He may want to push it inside
I know he loves me
Even though I can only see it in his eyes
It's always been this way
It's started to change
Sometimes though I just feel deranged
He's changed lately, sweeter and kind
Or that could be what I spy with my little eye

Texas Beach
Photo by
Lizabeth Garcia
ROAMING CHARLOTTE

Photo by Lizabeth Garcia

CAROLINA SUNSET

Photo by Lizabeth Garcia
Superstitions: Carefree or Damaging?

Cross Your Fingers and Hope You Find Out!

By Cara Grant

SWOSU Timed W.A.R.P. (Writing and Research Project) 1st Place Winner

Superstitions: often we either hate them or love them. Some superstitions have become so ritual in daily life that we don’t even think about the reason we participate in them; we just do! For example, the minute one of our peers suggests an unlucky event will take place in our life, we rush to the nearest piece of wood and knock the bad luck away. On other occasions, we take extra care to pick up pennies if they’re heads up; in contrast, if they’re heads down, we run away with our tails between our legs. One of the most common superstitions known in society today is the habit of crossing our fingers to instill good luck or waive a wrong, generally lying. Though this superstition has become a part of daily lives, how early did we really inhabit such a miniscule fallacy? Beyond the history of the habit, how did we as a society transform that habit into an adaptable action in an ever-progressing world, and how has that habit in turn transformed us?

As teachers love to remind students, there is truly a history to everything. From the creation of humans to the creation of the iPhone, history is rich with interesting and explanatory information. Superstitions are not detached from this concept. For a majority of the irrational acts of superstition we participate in, there is a defining history lurking beneath the surface. Lurking may paint a dreary and chilling historical picture on the subject, but in most cases, dreary and chilling is an excellent setting for the origins of superstitious beliefs. According to an article by Hannah Keyser, pagans in Western Europe created and developed the fingers-crossed superstition from a simple act of crossing index fingers with a peer to wish good luck to one another to the superstition we practice in the present of crossing our index and middle fingers to obtain the same outcome (Keyser). Within her article, Keyser explains, “The intersection [of a cross] was thought to mark a concentration of god spirits and served to anchor a wish until it could come true” (Keyser). It is also explained on the website Psychic Library that early Christians used their fingers to communicate by forming a cross symbol, thus avoiding persecution during a time when Christianity was illegal (“Crossing”). The history of our well-known fingers-crossed superstition is dark with tales of preventing dark spirits and persecution, but the current context in which we use it is significantly lighter.

As children we often tell secrets, but before we’ll spill the beans, the recipient might be asked to cross their heart and hope to die, symbolizing that they won’t repeat the secret, and if they do, they should hope to die. Although the recipient crossed their heart to keep the secret, the probably soon after crossed their fingers to escape it. In the modern world, society is hung up on finding new and improved ways to avoid responsibility and blame, but the solid, standard escape route still lies within our physical extremities! We have sculpted a means of survival for early Christians and a religious be-

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lief of food fortune for Pagans into a lazy excuse to spread gossip and deny our morals with justification. Though it may appear that we have simply created our own form of justification for wrong doing, this justification has in a way sculpted us.

Naturally, most humans have tendency to avoid conflict. Though we want to avoid conflict, humans have an even greater desire to evade guilt or culpability. The use of crossing our fingers to eliminate that factor of guilt has in part created a nature of laziness, but also arrogance. When we cross our fingers, we get to have our cake (do what we want) and eat it too (avoid responsibility for our actions). With such an easy escape route from accountability, we take on an attitude of invincibility. It isn’t so bad to lie because technically we exiled our promise to keep a secret or do good from the moment we agreed. Technically, we bought our Get Out of Jail Free Card the second our fingers crossed. All of this may seem a little heavy for a simple superstition, but as stated in the article in *Most Inside*, “… superstitions are merely the fear and weakness of mind and heart which leads to serious beliefs on rubbish facts” (“Everything”). The trivial aspects of our lives and beliefs can snowball and form a much loftier role in our thought process and character. One we let a superstition such as crossing our fingers become a safety blanket for wrong-doing, we allow an attitude of invincibility to overtake us, thus exemplifying how a superstition can not only be shaped by humans, but shape humans in its own way.

There are a plethora of reasons that people chose to oppose superstitions. For some, superstitions are a direct insult to their beliefs. For others, superstitions are simply a foolish form of denial against fact and science. The origins of crossing our fingers base around a presence of religious belief and a lack of scientific fact. Once the superstition was established, it progressed and evolved with the times to a much more modern flexible version of the original tactic. Aside from our effect on the superstition, the fingers-crossed superstition left a permanent mark on humanity and our attitude. Is crossing your fingers a silly sign of good luck for light-hearted fun, or a deeper seated problem that encourages the avoidance of accountability? Hopefully as history progresses, we’ll find out the true psychological effect of superstitions; cross your fingers . . . or don’t!

Works Cited


Artwork by
Karlee
Morgan

Art by Trent Lewellen
Infinite Unity

Photo by Chelsea Clark

Chasing Oklahoma Sunsets

Photo by Sally Schoenhals
Throughout life, we will meet people who are either a blessing of a lesson. I’ve had my fair share of lessons with someone I used to consider a close friend. This summer I found out I have ADHD and anxiety. I really leaned on a friend and confided in her. She acted like she understood and made me feel like I wasn’t alone. However, when the time came for her to stand up for me and defend me when I wasn’t there, she let me down. I was hurt that someone I trusted so much could so easily stand by and watch as somebody lied to me and belittled me. I felt like I wasn’t worth anything, that even someone who understood my constant battle would let me fight it alone. I was left out and bullied online. It’s taken months to learn to love myself again and see my worth. The experience has taught me that no one has my back more than my family, that everyone has their own struggles, and my faith in God has grown even stronger.

Firstly, my family has seen me in my darkest hours, but they still love me unconditionally. They’ve proven time and time again that they will always help me fight my ongoing battles. When I thought I was alone because my friend had stabbed me in the back,” they were there to listen and see things from new perspectives. When my “friends” decided not to include me anymore, my sister was there to go with me and make memories that are worth more than the fake ones I once had. Although I fight with my sister, no one comes to my defense quicker than she does. When I had a panic attack at practice and left, she was right behind me, even though I told her to stay. She took the consequences with me and didn’t leave me alone. The bond I have with my family has grown stronger since I’ve been hurt.

Secondly, I’ve learned that there are girls just like me who don’t know why they have a war against themselves every day. There are girls who put on happy faces when they’re really not happy at all. The girls I used to call my friends couldn’t see the pain behind my smile and the tears behind my eyes. Anxiety is real; it doesn’t make you weak. It makes you strong, because you fight battles every minute of everyday and still manage to keep on going. According to Laura Nott of the website Elements and Behavior Health, anxiety disorders are the most common of all mental illnesses and affect 25% of all teens and 30% of all teen girls. That’s a lot of

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kids who are confused and hurting. I’ve made it my responsibility to be kind to everyone, because everyone has their own problems and struggles. Kevin Love, a famous NBA player, recently wrote an article “Everyone Is Going Through Something” on the Players Tribune. Love states in his article, “On November 5th, right after halftime against the Hawks, I had a panic attack. It came out of nowhere. I’d never had one before. I didn’t even know if they were real. But it was real—as real as a broken hand or a sprained ankle. Since that day, almost everything about the way I think about my mental health has changed.” This has opened my eyes to the fact that I’m not the only one with a struggle.

Lastly, I’ve gotten closer to God. I have always been a Christian, but for a while, I resented God for giving me the hateful thoughts that flooded my mind and make me fight through this alone. I wanted to blame God, but I’ve learned that God didn’t give me the evil thoughts and tough situations, Deuteronomy 31:6 says, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave your nor forsake you” (New International Version).

I’ve come to realize He gave me my family that has been more understanding and helpful than anyone and he gave me my strength. It was not in his plan for me to be excluded and depressed. Jeremiah 29:11 says “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (New International Version). God has given me a perspective on life that most teenagers and young adults don’t have. I can put myself in other’s situation and feel other people’s struggles. I’ve been blessed with strength and empathy.

In conclusion, the friend that “stabbed me in the back” has taught me something that they don’t teach in school and perhaps the most important lesson I will ever learn. I don’t hate her and I’m not angry with her. I love her and I wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors. The experience has taught me that no one has my back more than my family, that everyone has their own struggles, and my faith in God has grown even stronger.

Works Cited


“Everyone is going through something.”— Kobe Bryant
In The Players Tribune, after suffering an anxiety attack during an NBA game.
West Texas Skies

Photo by Cami Costello
Senses

Cara Grant

I see a night sky
Flashes of lightning brighten the
dark like flash photography
Each star grows brighter with
every snapshot
My God did that
I hear children’s feet
Pattering like drums in an angry
forest
They argue and squabble, but still
say I love you before falling
asleep
My God did that
I smell the fragrance before the
rain
Thick and dense with promise
Swirling through the air as clouds
gather and rumble
My God did that
I taste sweet fruit
Rolling beneath my tongue
Sugary and fulfilling
My God did that
I feel fingers cling around mine
Questioning in simple shakes
how unconditional love exists
I feel the words slip from my lips
My God did that

Photo by
Deanette Stephenson

Photo by
Michaela Weaver
Throughout human history, superstitions have been utilized to provide an explanation for the seemingly unexplainable. Whether it is death, sorrow, sickness or phenomenon, references to biblical subjects or ordinary instances are forever tainted with a ruining reputation of bad luck. Despite the fact that knowledge of the natural world and causations for occurrences are greatly understood, society still beware Friday the 13th and spilling salt. These common fears of ordinary, benign actions are traced back to very common and influential predicaments like the bible or diseases.

Revelations 13:8 states, “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three-score and six.” From this biblical text the superstition of 666 is formed. The number has long since been foreboded by Christians and others alike. Numerous groups use the symbol to show rebellion, anarchy, Satanism, or other “evil” focuses. The number has made plenty of appearances in Hollywood, literature, music, and artwork. According to the researcher Frances Flannery from Bible Odyssey, the number is a mockery at the divine number of seven, which is seen as full, complete, and the number of days creation lasted. Six is the partial number and lacking of holiness; thus, the number is poisoned with a ghastly reputation. The reason for the reputation could also extend from Nero Caesar, a Roman emperor, according to Wayne Jackson from the Christian Courtier. Nero was Caesar at the time Revelation was thought to be written. He was described as a horrific ruler and of a “beastly” character. He was greatly critiqued and feared as manifestation of evil. His name translated from Greek to Hebrew coincidentally adds up to 666. The mark of the beast may have been greatly attributed to the persona of Nero and how close it was to the descriptions of Satan.

Across Central American, Greece, Mexico, the Americas, Rome, India, the Mediterranean, the worst curse to deliver is an evil look. The dismay of a bad glance is thought to be the fear of shamans having the ability to gift death to anyone they please. With their magical abilities, the only way to ward off such a danger was by amulets or other special jewelry. This oldest piece of protective jewelry was found in Croatia with an extraordinary age of 1,800 years, found on the Ancient Origins website. The ring was designed to protect the wearer from evil magic or the evil eye by its painted eye and rabbit for good fortune. The evil eye was a force to be reckoned with. Even the bible made references to the superstition (Matthew 6:22, Proverbs 28:22). The evil eye in India is named “Buri Nazar” and anyone, not just a shaman, can send illness, bad luck, or death by a gaze. Today, society still frowns upon the bad expression of strangers or foes.

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Death has sundry omens that range from culture to culture, a common theme among them: the bird. Birds are a humongous symbol for dying. They are seen as the messenger for death when they fly in a house or sit on a windowsill. The juncture of having a bird fly in a building is agreeably rare. When it happens around a sorrowful death or near an ill-stricken home, it is easily blamed on the animal. The origin of the superstition is not entirely pinpointed to an exact thing. Terry Sovil in his article “Black Witch Moth Butterfly of Death” noted, one cause originated in Mexico where the bird omen is a prominent wise tale; the Black Witch Moth is native to Mexico and is large enough to look like a bird or bat. The moth even goes by the name of “The Butterfly of Death.” It is attracted to fruit and indoor environments and can easily scare the life out of a homeowner. The catapult to fame for the widely-known bird omen could be literature and entertainment. Edgar Allen Poe wrote “The Raven” in 1845 and told of an eerie bird that drove a man to madness. *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier is an example of the fear of birds the their link to death. The story was even adapted into a film later on and became a hit; thus, the superstition was kept alive and well in modern society.

Instinctual fears that have shaped how humans have developed their early lives in cultures long ago still shape today. People have distain towards numbers, and certain gestures, or even animals. The legacy of old scary stories and wise tales has left a superstitious mark on our modern culture whether it is behavior or themes in our pop culture. The origins of these beliefs are problems that have long been proven with the simple rule: correlation is not causation.

Works Cited


Deep Breath

Photo by Cooper Taylor
Casablanca—Movie Review

By Ashton Odom

Casablanca was a cinematic breakthrough in its time. Casablanca was released in 1942 by Warner Brothers. The film was directed by Michael Curtis and starred Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

This film takes place in Casablanca during WWII. The audience meets our main character Rick (Humphrey Bogart) who owns a nightclub. Rick's club is the spot in Casablanca for refugees and corrupt axis officers. Rick's prickly exterior keeps him out of danger and isolated. One fateful night the audience meets Ilse and Victor. Rick immediately recognizes his ex-lover and is wary of her company. The audience follows Rick and Ilse as they sort out their rocky past and possibly a hopeful future, all while the chaos and danger of Casablanca echoes around them.

Casablanca has been deemed a classic by many in Hollywood for good reason. The movie has impeccable music, acting, casting, lighting, and screenplay. All these qualities, and many more, have made Casablanca a timeless classic in cinema.

The music is both effective and beautiful throughout the entirety of the film. The score of the film creates the perfect atmosphere featuring the jazz style that was popular in war time and the '40s. The score successfully reflects the mood of each individual scene from action packed chases to soft tender romantic scenes to the emotional heartbeat when Ilse does not meet Rick at the train station.

The performances by Bogart and Bergman are flawless. They portray a love that is undeniable, and that is what draws the audience deeper into the story. The actors did not interact much off screen, and that makes their on-screen chemistry unbelievable. They were completely able to step into their characters, and their lives became the narrative showing the actors' skill.

The casting in the film was renowned for its diversity. Demonstrating the reach of WWII, the casting being truly international reflected the war; actors from all over the world came together to make a film just as soldiers from all over the world came together to fight for peace.

The lighting in Casablanca was essential in creating the mood needed in each scene. Some prime examples of lighting being used to supplement the story are when: low-key lighting is used in the scene when Rick is in the bar trying to drink his sufferings away. The low-key lighting creates shadows and dimension and mirrors the depressing and hostile emotions felt by Rick (Belton). Later in this scene, Ilse appears in the darkness and has a large backlight behind her illuminating her entrance like a beacon. Her perfect angel-like appearance creates this feeling of hope in the dark, gloomy environment emulating the hope and happiness Rick and Ilse once had had. High-key lighting is used in many flashbacks that are bright and happy. These flashbacks are before their involvement in the war and before the couple's devastating heartbreak. The lighting helps differentiate between the past hope and happiness, and the present despair and misery.

I absolutely adore this film and would recommend this it to any viewers that love classic cinema or that enjoy war/romance films. I would not recommend this film to the typical teenager due to many teenagers having a bias against B&W films, but I would still attempt to persuade them to watch it. Overall, I love this film and hope many others will too.
Where the Ocean Meets the Sky

Photos by Samantha Bullard
Stone Meets Steel

Photos by

Veronica Watson
As stated by Christa McAuliffe, “I touch the future; I teach” (“10 Reasons to Teach”). The career path that I have chosen is teaching. Teaching is a great career path to choose for many different reasons. Many people choose to become a teacher to make an impact, get kids on the right track, and give back.

A teacher makes an impact in every child’s life. Educators help students realize their true potential. One teacher that made a huge impact in my life is Mrs. Sheila Hunter. She inspired me to become a teacher. Mrs. Hunter doesn’t judge anyone by his or her background. To me, Mrs. Hunter is not only a teacher, but someone that I can come to for anything. Teachers become mentors and friends to their students.

Not only do teachers make an impact in the lives of their students, they help get students on the right track by giving students the tools that they need to be knowledgeable citizens. Teachers show students how they can use the things that they learn in school to help them throughout their adult life. My FCCLA teacher, Ms. Hickey, taught me how to keep money books, be a leader, and make lasting relationships. She taught me skills that I will be able to use for the rest of my life. Teachers feel good when they do this because they are securing their future.

While making an impact and getting kids on the right track are some of the main reasons that people become teachers, giving back to society is the reason that I want to become a teacher. Many teachers have impacted my life, and I want to do the same for other students. I believe that teaching is one of the most rewarding careers that a person could choose. It might not get a lot of pay but giving back to society is worth more than money.

These are the things that helped me to decide that I want to become a teacher. I believe that some students need to be inspired by someone, to know that they can be great. Students also need to have all the right tools to be prosperous in society, and teachers give that opportunity to them. Teachers give back to society by not leaving any student behind. Teachers are the backbone of society. Christa McAuliffe was a teacher who was brave enough to reach for the stars aboard the doomed Space Shuttle Challenger. Although she never got to realize her dream of teaching from space, she inspired so many by being adventurous enough to explore education.
Photos by

Veronica Watson

Ups & Downs
Why Spending That Extra Five Minutes at Home is Important

By Reagan Benton

Is it better to be securely attached or insecurely avoidant? What is attachment anyway? Attachment is a survival impulse that keeps infants in love with their caregivers and protected. Mary Ainsworth experimented to see how infants would react to strangers in an unfamiliar environment without their mothers. Securely attached infants would become upset when their mother left, but then accept her warmly upon her return. However, insecure avoidant infants would become upset when their mother left and remain upset after her return. Secure attachment benefits us throughout our lives by building basic trust, creating a positive sense of self, and developing positive relationships with other people.

First, secure attachment builds basic trust. Secure attachment comes from sensible and loving care givers. Because these care givers have instilled love in their children, the kids begin to trust the world around them, this is called basic trust. This trust is instilled because when they were young and they turned to their mother, either in distress or just for comfort, she was always receptive of them. Children who have secure attachment are more likely to have the desire to explore the world around them because they know they have their parents, their safe place. The children know that if something happens in their life that makes them upset and they have no one to turn to, they can take their problems to their parents for support. On the other hand, children who are insecure avoidant develop a sense of basic mistrust of the world. These children are more likely to shy away from the world and become withdrawn because their parents were not present for their needs in the past.

Additionally, secure attachment produces a positive sense of self. When kids develop a positive sense of self, they realize they are capable of doing things on their own, and they begin to become comfortable with who they are and what they can do. Erik Erikson said that children had to have basic trust in their environment before they could develop a positive sense of self. Obviously, a child who was not securely attached would have a harder time developing a positive sense of self because they would not have basic trust in their environment. For example, if a girl’s parents are supportive of her efforts in a dance class, then she will be more open to continue dance and to trying other things. The more supportive her family is of her ideas and characteristics, the more likely she will be to experiment with what she wants and to love herself. If this same girl’s parents do not ask her about dance or attend her recitals, then she will be more likely to associate herself with less importance and less likely to repeat dance or try other new things. Moreover, the girl whose parents encouraged her dancing endeavors is more likely to continue to step out and follow her dreams than the girl whose parents did not seem to care.

Lastly, secure attachment brings improved positive relationships with others. The safe place that children find in their parents changes as they grow up. People gradually shift from confiding in parents, to friends in their teen years, and then life partners once they get married. Also, if people are confident in who they are, then they are better able to love others and develop meaningful relationships with them. A meaningful relationship is one where the two people can interact and feel safe with each other. With this in mind, consider a boy who was insecure avoidant with his parents. He is in a relationship with a girl, but he does not know how to communicate his feelings because he never has before. In contrast, if that same boy had been securely attached with his parents then he would have a more open and successful relationship with his girlfriend. Therefore, insecure avoidant children can become adults that are withdrawn or antisocial. If a person has never felt safe with someone in a relationship, then they may not be as willing to discuss their life because they do not know what it means to have this relationship. One has to know how to create this meaningful relationship with others, and they are less likely to know how to do that if they have never experienced one in their youth.

In essence, secure attachment leads to basic trust which yields a positive sense of self which ultimately leads to better relationships with others. Meaningful relationships sprout from secure attachments; therefore, the way a child responds to their mother affects them well into adulthood. Secure attachments offer a better quality of life to those who have experienced them, so the work to prevent children with insecure attachments is important. Caretakers should always respond to children’s needs to feel safe and loved—this way secure attachments are formed and lives are improved. We should spend that five extra minutes—or make it ten.
Artwork by Michaela Weaver
by Cody Ferris

Even though you are gone, I still can’t accept it. It has been almost five years. If only we could have gotten to your illness sooner. You weren’t even my dog, but I sure loved you like you were. You are what made me love golden so much. You made me feel golden. How you showed love for us and protected us, even little Daphne. Growing up with you by my side was the best. From me pulling on your tail, which made you hate me. To us going through the fields together playing and shooting birds. Even you chasing your rocks around all the time. You may have been my brother’s dog, but I grew up with you. You were only a few years younger. It is weird to say this, but you were my best friend growing up. You made things easier. When I was sick all the time, you’d come back to my room and check on me. I always laid in the floor and you’d lay beside me, you showed how loyal you were. I’m sorry you had to suffer, but you are at rest now. I thank you for the love you showed me growing and for teaching me how much I truly loved animals.
As journalist Elizabeth Fishel once said, "A sister is both your mirror and your opposite." I get told all the time that my sister and I are like night and day. We have very different personalities and we look nothing alike, but we also have a lot in common and have a great connection. Three reasons why I love having a sister are because I'll always have someone to talk to and that I can trust, I have two closets to find clothes in, and when I'm bored I always have her to hang out with and make memories.

Growing up we have been through a lot together, which makes us very close and that's why we have such a strong relationship.

Another reason why I love having a sister is sharing closets. My sister and I are close to same size, so most of our clothes fit each other. When we can't find anything to wear, we can go into each other's closets and look; however, we don't always like sharing. Since I'm the oldest, my sister gets all my old clothes that I don't want anymore, and she doesn't have to buy as many clothes when we go school shopping. I'm glad that I have a sister with whom I can share clothes.

Growing up, I have always had my sister to play and hangout. When we would get in trouble, our parents wouldn't let us hang out with our friends, so all we had was each other. Sometimes that wasn't a bad thing, because we learned to like each other and get along. Nowadays, we don't fight as much, and it's more fun to hang out with each other. Most of my memories throughout my life have been made with my sister.

Having a sister is one of the greatest gifts anyone can receive. It's easy to have a sister that talks, shares, trusts and makes memories with me—a forever best friend. Having a sister has taught me many things throughout my life. Being a sister has also helped and shaped me to become the person I am today. I am so thankful to have a sister to not only argue with at times, but to cherish every moment of my childhood with. Marian Eigerman spoke truthfully when she said, "A loyal sister is worth a thousand friends."
Double Rainbow

Photo by

Breann McKillip
Photos by Samuel Osterhout

“Little Friend”

“Bridge View”

Happiness is a State of Mind
Reliance is Golden

By Adam Bryson

As the world becomes increasingly automated, many people are no longer self-sufficient. This has caused many people to be dependent on others for things that those in the past did themselves. The results is that being self-sufficient is becoming increasingly rare and valuable in society. Being self-sufficient is beneficial due to the value in day to day life, the value in the work force, and the value in emergency situations.

In the modern world, it has become increasingly easy to be functional without being self-reliant. There are shops for everything, and most times, individuals do not even need to leave their house as they can call and have food and groceries delivered to their house. This has caused many people to no longer learn skills that at one point were considered essential to everyday life, such as sewing. According to “British Heart Foundation's Big Stitch Campaign,” less than forty percent of people could confidently say they can sew. This is a very drastic change from not even twenty years ago when many people were able to and did sew their own clothes. Now, however, people would much rather get a new shirt or a new pair of pants.

Not only is the lack of self-reliance affecting the individual, it is also affecting how companies hire new employees. The workforce has become increasingly educated as it becomes easier to go to college or other institutions of higher learning. This has caused employers to start putting more emphasis on practical skills when hiring. Many recent college graduates have very prestigious educational qualifications; however, they lack many practical skills that make an individual self-reliant. For example, an individual is heading to work and their tire becomes flat. If the individual is not self-reliant, they will need to call someone else to fix the tire and will be late. This is shown because as many as fifty percent of drivers who took a survey by “America’s Automotive IQ” were found to not be confident or not have any idea how to change a tire and that “only 42.2 percent said they felt confident...”(Spector). If they are self-reliant, however, they will not need to call someone to fix the tire and instead fix it themselves and arrive to work on time.

Being self-reliant is important, but not needed when it comes to the normal day and the work force. However, when persons are thrown into a survival situation they need to be able to become self-sufficient, or they may lose their life. This is something that is a growing problem. In the past when people were self-sufficient they were able to rebuild even after natural disasters because they had the skills. In the present, many people do not know skills that would be useful in major disasters such as economic collapse or invasion of foreign troops. This was a problem many artists and office workers faced during the Great Depression because after they were fired, the only jobs available were manual labor, and many had never done such jobs. This caused many to be overlooked and thus could not provide for their families.

The message is clear about how valuable and rare self-reliance is. The increase in technology has made many people’s lives easier, but with that ease comes complacency and laziness. In the modern world, many people have lost the value of self-reliance and are now over reliant on other people and technology.
Into the Sunset

Photo by Kelby Wilson
“Lauren!” my mom [hollered] at me through the hall, “Mrs. Shirley and Bill invited us over for dinner tonight. I’d like you to come with us.”

“Do I have to?” I groaned, “There’s not going to be anything for me to do. I’ll be so bored.”

My mom gave me the look that only she could give. That look has the power to make me feel like I need to repent for every wrong I’ve ever committed in my entire lifetime in the name of Jesus. Needless to say, I knew I would be attending dinner at Bill and Shirley’s that evening; no questions asked.

The old couple welcomed us at the door. Bill had sad eyes and a tired smile. His skin was dark and rough from his days in the garden. His attire almost always consisted of a plain white shirt and khaki slacks. Shirley’s figure was petite and fragile. She had soft, fair skin; her eyes were full of contentment, and her heart was made to serve.

Inside their modest, vintage home, the air smelled of sweet, homemade pecan pie with an occasional whiff of cinnamon and soap. In the living room, a shadow box of old war medals and badges rested on the wall above the bookshelf, along with a picture of a young man with familiar sad eyes and a tired smile. Along with this display, an old grandfather clock moved steadily, never missing a beat. (2) I could hear it ticking away the seconds of the evening in the quiet house. The atmosphere was relaxing, like the pitter-patter of rain on a windowpane. It was as if time stood still; the worries of life melted away in the warm, inviting, little home.

We entered the kitchen to help with any finishing touches for the meal. I decided my job would be to set the table. (1) As I searched for the silverware drawer, I noticed antique dishware covered the countertops. Decorative plates demanded attention on the wall above the gas stove. I was so mesmerized by the stories each plate withheld, I almost forgot what I had set out to do. As I set the table, Bill started bringing out food in large pyrex bowls. Grilled chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, rolls, and of course, pecan pie summoned me with their intoxicating smells.

Once everything was in its place, we [raced] to our seats to eat. My mouth watered just looking at the food, but eating it

(Continued on page 51)
was even better. The juicy, tender chicken complemented the creamy potatoes perfectly. The pecan pie was just as enticing as
the smell that filled the house. Every bite I took was just as delicious as the one before.

Once dinner was over, we made our way to the living room to let our food settle and chat. I picked a seat right next to
Bill. Their couch was soft and had the perfect smoosh to it. While Mom and Dad were quietly talking to Mrs. Shirley, Bill nudged
me in the ribs and struck up a conversation.

“You wanna know how to never have to wash the dishes again?’ he asked.

I smirked and shrugged my shoulders, unsure of what would follow.

“Every time your mother asks you to do the dishes, chip a plate,” he chuckled. “That way, your mom will get sick of you
accidentally chippin’ all her plates; eventually, you won’t ever have to wash a dish again.”

We both sat there giggling and snickering as we carried on our goofy conversation. We teased each other and talked
about our hobbies as time casually walked by. A comfortable and familiar relationship blossomed between us. Minutes quickly
turned into hours as we sat on their old, tan yet inviting couch.

All too soon, my mom announced that our wonderful evening had ended. I slowly rose out of the chair, said my good-
byes, and trudged to the door.

The night I had been terribly dreading had turned into one of my most treasured memories. After that night, I continued
to visit Bill and Shirley often. The simple yet comforting old couple had turned into my adopted grandparents. I loved them dear-
ly.

Bill and Shirley have both passed away, and I still think about them often. I miss those wonderful days of interesting con-
versation with them; however, they bestowed upon me so much about the relationships we form with others. Bill taught me that
life shouldn’t be taken too seriously; he taught me that humor is important and comforting. Shirley taught me to extend grace to
to all people, and to look for the beauty in the little things in life. I learned that living simply, investing in others, and loving like Je-
sus is the most fulfilling lifestyle I could have. They taught me that the worries and haste of life will all pass
away, but focusing on Jesus and serving others will last forever. I’m so thankful for the legacy this sweet
couple has permanently [ingrained] within my conscience.

I can’t wait to see them again one day. It will be a sweet homecoming with folks like themselves.
“Where the Wildflowers Grow”

Photo by Kelby Wilson
Mirroring Elegance

By Wini Oldfield

Reflecting the beauty.
Breathing in the fresh, crisp air
My mind settles in peace.

“As the Water Falls”
Photo by Wini Oldfield
A life can change in little as three seconds; for me it took just that long. Like any morning before school, I strapped on my backpack, grabbed my peach for breakfast, snatched up my keys, and headed out the door for school. It was a brisk, cool morning, the sun smiled down at me, and the birds were angels floating around singing; it was the first day cold enough to wear sweatpants. I live approximately twenty minutes from the school, so my car trips feel like driving to Oklahoma City and back every time I go somewhere. I cruised down the back roads listening to my usual country playlist and took the first juicy, sweet bite of a perfect Colorado peach. I drove a 2002 white GMC Sierra pickup that had crank windows. After I’d finished that peach, I cranked the window and tossed the peach pit out of the window. I took my eyes off the road for a fraction of a second, and that’s all it took for my life to change.

I glanced back at the road as I cranked my window up and everything became a blur; it all happened so fast, and sometimes I question if it really happened at all. A mailbox came out of nowhere and startled me causing me to jerk the wheel too hard to one side, so I attempted to jerk the wheel to the other side and that’s when I lost control. I didn’t feel anything, and the only thing I can remember is hanging there, my truck laying on its passenger side, barbed wire strung everywhere, and my truck screaming at me to turn it off. I went into panic mode; frantically I undid my seatbelt, feet falling and hitting the passenger side window, which was now laying on the ground, and my shaky fingers rushing to turn the truck off. My next move was to call my dad; I searched everywhere in that busted up vehicle to find my phone, but couldn’t because it had been ejected from the vehicle when I had rolled over.

I consistently mumbled, “This is just a bad dream. You’re going to wake up.” I mumbled the words until the words became screams. I had to get out of the vehicle, so I cranked the window down and used the steering wheel to boost myself out of my totaled truck.

Sitting on the driver side door I hollered to all the people that had stopped to watch, “I need a phone. Does anyone have a phone?” I tasted the blood and bile rising in my throat as I hopped down and grabbed the lady’s outdated flip phone to call my dad.

“Hello?” I heard my dad’s distant voice over the phone.

“Dad, it’s Mattie. I got in a wreck and flipped my truck and I need you to come get me. I’m so sorry,” my shaky breath blurted out as tears pricked the backs of my eyes.

I could hear his disappointed sigh, “Where are you?”
“On Falcon road by Grandma’s old house. Hurry.”
“Okay I’ll be there in a minute.” He hung up and I waited in agony for him to get there.

After an eternity of waiting, which was probably only ten minutes, my dad finally showed up. I practically fell in his arms; I didn’t care that he was probably mad and disappointed. I just wanted him to hold me and make me not feel as awful about myself as I already did.

I half expected him to be red-faced, yelling, veins popping out of his neck, but all I saw was his eyes filled with concern and disappointment; I could feel the tension radiating off of him as we simply stood there staring at the mess I’d just made. His shoulders slowly relaxed, and he snaked his arm around me in a comforting hold that only my dad could give me. My dad was as thankful as I was that I managed to walk away with barely a scratch. He turned to me and simply asked, “Well how on earth did you manage to do this?” I just shook my head and stood there in silence until the police officer came over and asked how I had wrecked, so I repeated the tale of events to him and my dad.

I talked with the cops and repeated all the basic questions that they had asked me over and over. After that, I crawled into the wrecked truck like a frail little mouse and retrieved my books and bags, then went and sat in my dad’s old, muddy farm truck praying for the day to be over.

My dad climbed into the truck and laid down a piece of paper, “Well, there’s your 250 dollar reckless driving ticket.” I burst into tears as I let all the events that had happened in the previous hour set in. All my dad whispered through my sobs was, “Hey, it’s okay. Accidents happen. You’ll be fine.”

Those words made the pain go numb, and I let my disappointment in myself subside as he drove me to school.

As we walked into the school to check me in after my hectic morning, he leaned over and said, “You still have to play in your game tonight.” I smiled a small smile and tried to ease my anxiety as I realized I had plenty for which to be thankful.
Dinner in the Highlands, Ft. William, Scotland

By Olivia Locke

A Road to Nowhere Photo by Mekinzi Shattuck
Basketball had always been more than a sport to me. It was my go-to therapy method, my favorite past time, and the best part of the school day. I had fallen in love with the game, until one day my world came crashing down. The walls started to close in on me, I could feel my blood pulsing through my veins, sweat dripped endlessly down my forehead, and it just seemed that the whole world was rooting against me. That was the very day I was introduced to the one and only senior girl of the basketball team. Little did I know of the trials I was about to face, and the lessons I was about to learn.

It all started my freshman year of basketball. I fortunately was good enough to get a varsity suit, and I also got to practice with the varsity. It was a very exciting moment for me. I can remember to this day the smell of the newly furbished floor as it had been redone before the practice season began. I had so much nervous energy and was ecstatic to show coach just what I could accomplish. The leathery feel of the smooth wave ball in my hand gave me the boost of confidence I needed. My first official high school practice was under way, and it had started off perfect! The girls already knew that I could shoot the ball really well just by watching me warmup. The ball seemed to be in love with the basket that day because I couldn’t miss. Most of my teammates were excited to have a good shooter on the team, but apparently not all of them felt that way. The senior girl felt threatened by my abilities; she had it out for me from the beginning. She would send a little shove my way here and there. She wouldn’t pick me to be on her team for scrimmaging even if I were the obvious choice for the position. She tried turning my friends against me, but thankfully failed. Her feelings towards me made her steam like a kettle, and some days I actually thought I could see steam coming off of her. All in all, she was a wrecking ball crashing down on my hopes and dreams.

Coach had no idea what was going on. He was about as clueless as a lamb being led to slaughter. He never did figure it out, and so I went to my parents and told them what was going on.

“Just wait it out and see what happens. Who knows what could become of this year.”

“I don’t really feel like waiting will help, but whatever you say.”

So, I did what my parents told me, but the problem never did resolve itself. In fact, it only seemed to get worse as the season progressed. I continued to get better throughout the season, but so did her fiery arrows of fury that always seemed to land right in the middle of my back. Finally, I had enough of her torment and relentless, unexplainable anger, so I went to my parents and told them I was ready to quit. They sat me down and we had a very long discussion about my decision to quit. Their words sounded very jumbled, and as they were talking all I could hear was the sound of the blackbird tattering on the window. It appeared like they were talking to a brick wall, because I had basically made up my mind already. I’m not really sure what changed my mind, but I am really glad something changed it.

I was relieved when the grouchy senior graduated, so I could finally relax and have a good time doing what I love. I ended up playing through the season, and I received Sharp Shooter Award for my freshman year. I also was offered the opportunity to play basketball at the collegiate level for Oklahoma Baptist University on a full ride. That just goes to show that hard work, dedication, and especially pushing through adversity will bring blessings. I learned that lesson the hard way, but I don’t regret pushing through, because it brought me one of the greatest opportunities I could ask for.
THE WRECK
by Hannah Alford

It was a cold December morning; the weather station was calling for ice on the roads. My mom came in my room, woke me and my sister up and got us ready for school. It was like every other typical morning for a third grader, eat breakfast, watch some cartoons and go to school. My mom was leaving for work. She volunteered to go help transport prisoners to another county. She is one of the few students in her police academy class that volunteered to transport prisoners.

I grabbed my fluffy coat and raced out the door for my step dad to take us to school. He turned on the radio, which could probably be heard two blocks away, and we jammed out to the Disney radio. I got out of the car, walked inside and headed to class. My day was going well. We started off with a spelling test and then on to science. My favorite part about school was playing outside with my friends. We had this giant metal slide on the playground that my friends and I took turns sliding down. Then was off to lunch.

As the day was coming to an end. I walked in the gym with my sister, and we sat down and waited for my step dad to come pick us up. He was running a little late, and then a teacher came and got us and told us he was here. We hopped in the car, and he didn’t say a word. He began to speed excessively across town. We pulled into the police station and he parked next to my mom’s car.

“Get out and get in her car,” he said, with nervousness in his voice.

“Why what’s going on?” I began to reply.

“Just do as I say.”

I got out as he asked, and jumped in my mom’s car. We got back on the road and started heading the opposite direction of the house. I blurted out, “Where are we going?” I got no response. Everything around us seemed to be moving past us faster and faster as he drove like a Nascar driver down the highway. I knew something was wrong.

We pulled up to a tan hospital on a hill in some random town I had never been too. My step dad led me, my sister and my brother into a tiny room. We sat there for what seemed like a decade, still not knowing what was going on. A preacher walked into the room and closed the door.

“Hi, guys. I’m a preacher here in Houston, Missouri. How is everyone?”

“We’re fine,” replied my step dad.

The preacher turned and looked at us.

“Well, I am here to inform you guys on the current situation. It seems your mom has been in a vehicle accident,” the preacher said.

My first initial thought was that she was going to end up in a wheelchair. About two years before, she got into a car wreck that broke her back. She was told if she got into another wreck, she wouldn’t be able to walk again. Next a doctor came in the room and told us that she was in too critical condition for us to go in and see her. We waited and waited, which felt like a lifetime.

Eventually, my stepdad’s sister came to the hospital and took us home with her. When we arrived, she got out her air mattress, and we went to bed. The next morning, we all got up and ate some breakfast. We sat around and watched TV to pass the time. After a while my grandma pulled in the driveway. We went to see her, and then five other people got out of the car too. Not my mom, though. As they all walked in with a worried look on their faces, I knew something was wrong. My grandma then proceeded to tell us, “Your mom didn’t make it.” She passed away in the ambulance on their way to St. Louis during the night. Immediately the tears came falling like a waterfall.

They informed me that she had broken every bone in her body. She was not wearing her seatbelt, and the transport van flipped numerous times. One of the prisoners also passed away due to the car accident. I then left for Oklahoma to go live with my dad the day after my mom’s funeral. I left without saying bye to my friends at school, which was devastating. I had to start completely over, new town, new school, new me. My siblings and I are doing fine now. It’s almost been ten years since the wreck, and we’re still coping.

Life teaches people that, even through all the hard times, life still goes on.
Hello    By Alisha Caldwell
**Killer Instinct**

By Shylar Thornton

It is a very special feeling accomplishing something for the very first time. The first time I can remember this feeling is when I killed my first deer when I was only ten years old. Killing a deer takes much more than luck; there is a certain skill one must possess to accomplish that goal.

It was late November with snow covering the ground. I could see my breath with every exhale I took. My numb fingers gripped the rough cold trigger.

"Pull the trigger," said my dad.

"I can't get on it. The gun is too heavy," I replied.

"Hurry, it is going to run away," my father kept insisting to me.

I watched the deer stand in the field with the sunbeams kissing off his majestic back. He looked over his shoulder at me and took off running towards the woods. As he ran, I saw is antlers, which looked more like trees sitting on top of his head than antlers.

Not many things in life will take the wind out of your sails like watching the deer of your dream with its perfect brown skin run out of sight. In my whole life I had never felt more like an idiot. I could only wish for another opportunity at that deer. As my dad and I sat talking to each other, I saw movement out of the corner of my eye. As I whipped my head to look, I saw the buck of my dreams standing in an opening about ten feet wide.

"Get the gun!" my father said with a new sense of excitement.

As I grabbed the gun, a loud crack sounded as I looked around in frustration. Angrily, I asked, "What was that?"

"That was hunters on the field across the way," calmly replied my father.

To me, missing that buck once again was like Dooms Day. A great sense of anger and sadness fell upon me. Never in my life had I even had a glimpse at a buck of that caliber, and when I did, I couldn't even get a shot off at him. The beautiful green and white colors coming from the snow-covered wheat field began to fade and the deer became scarce as nightfall was near. As my father and I were almost ready to turn it in for the night, I saw it again. A deer standing in an opening eating its last meal. I picked up the old brown Winchester 243 and looked through the scope at a small buck.

"Steady your breathing or you are not going to be able to get on it," my father stated.

I was able to get my breathing calmed as I steadied the gun and got the cross arrows right on the shoulder of the gorgeous deer. "Boom" the gun went as I [yanked] the trigger. I saw the deer [stagger] in his tracks and fall down.

"Let's go!" my father said proudly.

Dumbly I asked, "Did I get him?"

"Yes it was a perfect shot," said my dad.

As we walked up to him, we saw it wasn't the monster we had seen earlier in the night but it was a special moment nonetheless. My father was so proud of me. I think he was ten times more excited than I was. That moment brought us even closer than we already were.

I learned from this experience some things are too go to be true, but if you have the opportunity at something, you need to [pounce] on it. If you don't, you might end up with a 90-pound deer that looks like Bambi's brother.
The Day I Broke My First Bone
A Narrative by Derick Bowman

It started out like a normal day. I went to the first day of the last week of school my freshman year. The first class I had was my athletics class. That’s when it happened. The day was basically what you would call a free day. Coaches went off to do more important things, so we were left to do whatever we wished. Since this was athletics class, naturally most of us decided to do something athletic.

“How about we just play football?” my friend Gus suggested. After some goading from a few other kids, we had enough for two teams of seven. This wasn’t an actual playing field, because we didn’t want to walk over to the practice field. While the practice field and line yards to know where each play would start, we just used a medium sized patch of land about 50 yards long. The practice field, having a sprinkler system, had good grass. The land we were using had very hard dirt. Looking back, that should’ve made us move to the field. The ground was as hard as concrete, with only the grass to help. There was grass over more than half of the land, but it was very dry. It wasn’t exactly brown, but you couldn’t call it green. The grass only saw water when it rained.

“Are we going to play 2-touch, or playing regular tackle?” some kid asked.

“We have to play tackle or it won’t be fun,” I said. I didn’t know it at the time, but that decision changed my whole summer. Some people protested that, but we shrugged it off as them being lame about it. It then went to a vote, and we played tackle.

The sky was as bright as a flashlight being shined in your face constantly. That was a factor in both teams passing ability. I was always regarded as a substantially hefty guy, but I had the speed to match most of these guys. I couldn’t jule or like Gus, but still could run enough as far as the coach was concerned. I ran the ball a respectable amount of time. But I wished. Since this was athletics class, naturally most of us decided to do something athletic.

“I got Derek,” said Reece. I smirked when I heard that. We hiked the ball. He was coming my way. I immediately turned around to go on the far right side. I was sprinting by this time. It didn’t matter that we had 3 other downs to use, this battle was between Reece and I, and I made it to the end-zone.

I felt myself “fall up,” as my friend put it, into the air immediately after crossing. I hit the ground with the force of a truck. I heard my bone make a weird sounding rolling sound, like two rod gears grinding against each other by the tips. I didn’t think of that as a snapping sensation, so I got up quickly because it didn’t really hurt. I picked up the ball and tried to throw it. My collarbone instantly felt like I was just stabbed by a dull knife that was near the melting point of heat, repeatedly. It only lasted for a split second.

“Wow, that felt fantastic,” I said with sarcasm and pain. I knew I had a smile on my face. I was trying to rotate my arm, and it was hard, but I was able to it.

“I think I’m going to sit out for a minute guys.”

“My bad man,” said Reece. I genuinely thought that funny.

“At least I got the touchdown. That’s what counts, right?” I asked.

Since I didn’t hear a snapping sound just the rolling sound, I still didn’t think it was broken. The coaches were told, and they weren’t sure about it either. I went to my history class which was in a building right beside the field. After a while I asked if I could go to office, because there was a continuous small pain coming from my shoulder. I remember right after I left the class and turned the corner, I started crying lightly. That was also the last time I ever cried. I composed myself and went to the office. They called my mom and we went to the Sayre hospital. The hospital smelled like cotton balls. I went and got an X-ray. The X-ray showed nothing was serious, but the doctor wanted to look at it longer and let us leave.

When night came, my mother helped me take my shirt off. When I raised my arm, my collarbone immediately snapped, and this time I definitely heard it this time. The pain this time made the earlier pain feel like a high-five. I bounced up and down in the same spot more than 50 times. I remember that I said “Ow” calmly and repeatedly after every bounce. My mother later described it as a kind of “scream yelling.” I felt the bone marrow seep into my bloodstream. I immediately felt sick. My body was laughing at me.

I went to Elk City Hospital the next day with my father. The next X-ray showed the bone split in half completely going down farther into my body rather than out through my skin. The first X-ray showed the bone only had a small fracture going all the way through, barely hanging on apparently. I was out for next football season and had to put off getting my driver’s license, because my 16th birthday was next week.

I ended up needing to get a plate with six screws on my collarbone for six months. If I wanted, I didn’t have to take it out. I left it in and it’s still in my body four years later. That’s the story of the day I broke my first bone.